





Map design © 2021 East Grampian Coastal Partnership

**Aberdeen** is a fascinating city of huge contrasts. The Oil Capital of Europe is also one of the best wildlife watching sites in Europe. A long-term tourist hot spot that once had as many universities as the whole of England, the Granite City is ultra-modern but where a business sign says 'Established 1472'.

It has always been one of Scotland's key cities, occupying the land around a natural harbour facing northern Europe, leading to strong trade links. Combined with an abundance of natural resources, this has resulted in a wealthy and vibrant city.

## EXPLORING THE ABERDEEN COAST

Walking routes have been added to this map to encourage those who would otherwise just use the guide to browse over a coffee table. There is so much to see and do around the coast, only a taste of the area is possible in these walks. The route way marks on the front and narrative instructions on the reverse of this map should be sufficient to find your way around but it is always advisable to have an accurate map to hand and plan your day with care, especially being mindful of weather conditions and public transport timetables.

## Walk A

**Stage 1**  
**Aberdeen Beach and Old Aberdeen**  
Distance: 8.2 miles (13km)  
Height Gain: 500ft (200m)  
Terrain: Good paths, pavements, some sand and mud  
While this circular walk can be started at a number of places including Union Street, Aberdeen University or Seaton Park, the flat concrete area just south of the Beach Ballroom faces a great view of Aberdeen Beach and the city's relationship with the sea.  
To your north, brightly coloured oil supply vessels are often anchored in front of eleven massive offshore wind turbines. To the south, Aberdeen harbour is always a hive of activity and not just with ships - dolphins can regularly be seen feeding at the entrance where the dark waters of the River Don meet the sea.  
What the heyday of the tourist industry is long gone, this is still an extremely popular place. Walkers, cyclists, joggers and inline skaters can be out in force and on a hot summer weekend, the beach will still be packed.

**Stage 2**  
After taking in the view head north. At this point, you have two options: the high road, low road and the middle way. The hardest option is the low route following the beach. Walking on a beach can be hard but the sand is firm and close to the water. However, the middle way would be a long walk with wet feet. You can take the high road and see the water but the beach is crowded. The middle ground is often the best option, especially as there are covered seating areas at regular intervals.

**Stage 3**  
After about 1 mile the estuary of the river Don comes into view. Here a track to the right leads to the Winslow on the Sea sculpture created by Minneapolis-based Mexican Lourdes Cue in 1984. Looking through these three granite blocks, the rough-hewn rectangular holes frame the sea in your view. Since their installation, they have taken on a new role as a memorial to loved ones as the flowers and plaques show.

**Stage 4**  
Head inland you will reach the A90. This is a busy road with pedestrian edges in the middle. Take care to cross safely and look upriver from the bridge. From this point take the small track to the south of the Don. The river Don is still held at this point and you may even see seals hauled out on the large island at low tide, their grazing or sunning on the rocks. The walk takes on a different character by following the wooded path high above the river.

**Stage 5**  
Soon you reach the Brig o' Balgownie and Don Street. Turn right for the great views up and down the river at the bridge. Please remember the dwellings are privately owned. Turn back the way you came but carry up on the paved road.

**Stage 6**  
Heading south on Don Street you soon see a path leading right, along the river, and signposted Seaton Park Woods. Follow this well-made path for half a mile until you reach a walled and the main part of the park begins. This is a great place to look for otters. Just before the building with a large picture of a steam engine, head into the park aiming for Cathedral Walk.

**Stage 7**  
Follow 'The Green' north, passing Aberdeen Market and to the Market Street, turning right down the hill before using the pedestrian crossing and heading left down Ship Row. If you have time, have a look in the Aberdeen Maritime Museum before heading down Shore Brae to face the harbour.

**Stage 8**  
Cross the main road and head to the heart of the university along the high street. At this point a number of tiny passages can be used to head through towards the library, but there's a maze of signs starting central from the old to the new.

**Stage 9**  
Head past the giant cube that is the Sir Duncan Gordon Library Cathedral before turning left, toward central Aberdeen. After a mile passing a large retail park, you reach the A96. This may not seem the most inspiring but walking in some of the wintery birch trees host a stunning view of the sea.

**Stage 10**  
At the corner with Elmbank Terrace, as you pass over the railway line on a footbridge, it is hard to believe that you have even seen seals hauled out on the large island at low tide, their grazing or sunning on the rocks. The walk takes on a different character by following the wooded path high above the river.

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**Stage 12**  
There are several options at this point and if you have time, a visit to the Tolbooth Museum is well worth the slight detour before heading west along Union Street and down the Back Wynd steps to 'The Green'. This is a fascinating, almost subterranean area with many shops and bars, a playground in this area in the 1600s would have been that of the poor. However, the reason for joining now for entertainment - it was to cover the eyes of children being held captive before being shipped for slavery.

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**Stage 14**  
At the very busy A96 to your left is a pedestrian crossing, then head onto Regent Quay, on your right is the harbour. Carry on your right and become Waverley Quay and you go to Wellington Street. Turn left here away from the harbour and follow this until reaching a grassed area. At the roundabout turn right onto the Esplanade and you will soon reach the sea.

**Stage 15**  
Make your way north along the seafront to the start of the walk, passing amusement arcades and the mouth of the River Don and New Aberdeen around the River Dee. In 1136, New Aberdeen became the first to be recognised as a trading burgh. This was followed by a Royal Charter in 1175.

**Stage 16**  
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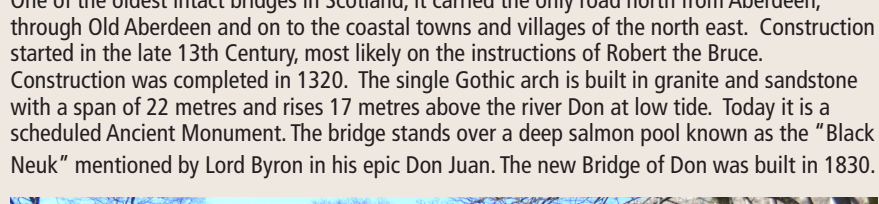
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## History & Places

**The Brig o' Balgownie, Don Street, Old Aberdeen**  
One of the oldest intact bridges in Scotland, it carried the only road north from Aberdeen, through Old Aberdeen and on to the coastal towns and villages of the north east. Construction started in the late 13th Century, most likely on the instructions of Robert Bruce. Construction was completed in 1320. The single Gothic arch is built in granite and sandstone with a span of 22 metres and rises 17 metres above the river Don at low tide. Today it is a scheduled Ancient Monument. The bridge stands over a deep salmon pool known as the 'Black Nidd' mentioned by Lord Byron in his epic Don Juan. The new bridge of Don was built in 1830.



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## Walk A

**Stage 10**  
Cross the pedestrian railway bridge and turn left following the A96 until you bear right down George Street. Keep going as the road becomes one of Aberdeen's busy shopping thoroughfares passing the Bon Accord Centre.

**Stage 11**  
Turn left onto Upper Kirkgate before reaching Broad Street which is home to Marischal College and the Town House.  
While this area leads for the eyes of the peregrine falcons that breed on the towers locally. Passing the Town House, you reach Union Street.

**History & Places**  
**Marischal College**  
Founded in 1593, Marischal College was Britain's 7th university. The original building was constructed in 1635 and is the 2nd largest granite structure in the world. It is now home to Aberdeen City Council having been leased from the University of Aberdeen for 100 years of you look above the entrance, you can see the coat of arms of the main supporters of the original town universities.

**History & Places**  
**Aberdeen Airport - Dyce**  
Aberdeen Airport opened in 1934. The busiest year was 2013 with over 3.5 million passengers heading primarily to regional UK, Ireland and European destinations.  
Becoming RAF Dyce during WWII the airfield deployed the Avro Scottish long range reconnaissance aircraft along with iconic Spitfire fighters. One of the most famous planes ever to land at RAF Dyce was a German Junkers JU 88 night fighter. Carrying two secret weapons the plane landed in May 1943 flown by a crew eager to defect. It is now in the Aberdeen RAF Museum.  
Do you ever spare a thought when hearing a helicopter overhead near Aberdeen? It is likely they are travelling to or from an offshore oil or gas installation located somewhere in the North Sea with the helicopter operational since the 1960s. Whilst you might expect the aircraft to be incredibly well trained, the passengers too are skilled in the professions needed to operate every facet of an oil and gas operation, as well as the services needed to look after everyone living on these facilities for weeks at a time. Every passenger must undergo survival training and wear a thermal suit, life jacket and locator beacon.  
There are 40-50 helicopter flights per day, each with up to 19 passengers and 2 crew, currently operated by four main carriers and their distinctive liveries.

**History & Places**  
**Aberdeen Harbour**  
Aberdeen Harbour really is a place of surprises. It is one of Scotland's economic power houses and home to one of Europe's best wildlife sanctuaries (see The Hunt). The natural geography has been altered beyond all recognition with concrete walls and industry, yet it is also the point where one of Scotland's iconic salmon rivers meets the sea.  
Going back 5000 years, Aberdeen Harbour would have been a wild river estuary, similar to the mouth of the Spey and the Ugie, with shifting sand banks and bears hunting for salmon. It is likely that early farmers made this process easier and they have travelled, lived and fished along the estuary.  
The navigational use of the harbour was first formalised in 1136 when King David granted charter allowing the Burgesses of Aberdeen to charge a tax on vessels using the estuary. The presence of a sand bar across the entrance was however a major obstacle to the movement of boats.  
For the next 500 years, improvements to the harbour were gradual with small quays adding the loading and unloading of vessels. In 1652, the first post came to Aberdeen to charge a tax on vessels using the estuary. The presence of a sand bar across the entrance was however a major obstacle to the movement of boats.  
The transition from fishing to oil & gas showed some agility. The Don Fishing Company was formed in 1902 at port of JW Holdings. In 1912 it developed a business repairing ships and can claim to be the best city in Europe for watching whales and dolphins. With a bit of luck, the water is alive with 20 dolphins. A large male leaps 3 metres into the air as a second stage, the female and then everything goes quiet. The tallest in the tank, until a mighty tail sweeps through the water in a dramatic display, followed by a second eruption as a large salmon is thrown far into the air. The rest of the pod is also on the hunt with other salmon being caught upstream.  
After the feast is over there is a display of grace, with dolphins often dolphin leaping high into the air. The newborn seem to be having the most fun happily repeating, whilst being constantly watched by a watchful mum.  
This drama can happen only 2 miles from Aberdeen city centre at the entrance to harbour and can claim to be the best city in Europe for watching whales and dolphins. With a bit of luck, the water is alive with 20 dolphins. A large male leaps 3 metres into the air as a second stage, the female and then everything goes quiet. The tallest in the tank, until a mighty tail sweeps through the water in a dramatic display, followed by a second eruption as a large salmon is thrown far into the air. The rest of the pod is also on the hunt with other salmon being caught upstream.  
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